

SAS

SAS Institute Inc.

Public Sector

Real World Application

U.S Bureau Of The Census

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The Bureau of the Census - know as "the nation's fact finder" - conducts the decennial census of population and housing, demographic and economic censuses, and more than 200 annual surveys, many of them for other government agencies. Most of the data released as periodic economic indicators are derived from surveys of businesses; most of the demographic data come from the census or household surveys. The Census Bureau is the largest statistical agency in the United States and one of the largest in the world. By law (Title 13, U.S. Code), the secretary of Commerce, through the Census bureau, is responsible for taking a census of the population of the country every 10 years for the purpose of reapportioning among the states their representation in the House of Representatives. The Census Bureau's population counts also are used to redistrict state legislature and as one element in deciding the distribution of billions in federal grant money.

In addition, the Census bureau monitors the nation's economic health through a system of recurring national surveys. Its statistical reports are used for programs and services at all levels of government. Local organizations, both government and non-government, business and industry and others value the data. They analyze them, looking for trends, and use them to make planning decision and devise sound marketing strategies.

The Economic Area of the Census Bureau has the primary responsibility for the collection, compilation, and presentation of economic data. The standard Economic Processing System (StEPS) is a generalized survey processing system for the 100+ current surveys in the Economic Area of the U.S. Census Bureau. StEPS was developed using SAS product solutions. Prior to 1994, processing in the Economic Directorate occurred along subject matter lines. That is, each subject area developed processing systems to accommodate a survey or group of surveys. Over time, this resulted in 17 separate processing systems for approximately 130 surveys in the current programs-with many of these systems performing the same basic functions.

In 1994, the Economic Directorate established objectives which included the elimination of redundant processes through common solutions, reduction of efforts spent on processing and systems maintenance, and a refocus of subject matter staffs back to data needs and program concerns. Mr. Howard Ray Dennis, Assistant Division Chief of the StEPS system, stated that his group knew they had to find a solution that could meet the demands of pulling the data from a various number of systems including legacy systems, VAX, VMS, Windows NT, and others. Because of the site wide license available at the Bureau of Census and its capability to access and manage large volumes of data, the group chose SAS as the solution to help them streamline their systems into one. Finally, they used SAS's application development tools to give their application a graphical user-friendly touch. StEPS meets the Economic Directorate's major strategic objectives. In 1998, three pilot annual surveys were processed on StEPS during calendar year 1999. In 2000, approximately another 25 surveys will migrate to StEPS.

Ray feels that StEPS has not only enabled them to eliminate and reduce expenses through hardware and resources, but has also given them a system that is current and easier to maintain. Currently StEPS is looking to SAS to assist them in exploring additional areas in which the program's efficiencies can be enhanced. Additional areas of functionality include drill down reporting and multidimensional data views using SAS's OLAP capabilities. The directorate will run StEPS on DEC Alpha machines using Unix as the operating system.

"Technology is an important tool that should be utilized to achieve results. A best practices approach to success in achieving results is the optimal combination of technology, information sharing, and the methodology utilized to implement a solution in an iterative, incremental manner."
